

HOUSEHOLD SAFETY:

PRODUCT LABELING



HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS MATERIAL

What Makes a Product Hazardous?

A hazardous product is one whose use or disposal poses a threat to health or the environment. The threat is judged by measuring specific properties of a substance.

Properties of Household Hazardous Products

A product or substance is hazardous when it contains one or more of the following properties:

- **Flammable:** Can be easily set on fire or ignited.
- **Explosive/Reactive:** Can detonate or explode through exposure to heat, sudden shock or pressure.
- **Corrosive/Caustic:** Can burn and destroy living tissues when brought in contact.
- **Toxic/Poisonous:** Capable of causing injury or death through ingestion, inhalation or absorption. Some toxic substances are known to cause cancer (carcinogens), genetic damage (mutagens) and fetal harm (teratogens).
- **Radioactive:** Can damage and destroy cells and chromosomal material. Radioactive substances are known to cause cancer, mutations and fetal harm.

Categories of Household Hazardous Products

Hundreds of products in hardware stores, convenience stores, discount shops, auto repair shops and on supermarket shelves are hazardous. For ease of learning about the subject, most household hazardous materials can be grouped in the following four categories:

- **Automotive Products:** Waste oil, antifreeze, gasoline, brake fluid
- **Household Cleaners:** Oven cleaners, drain cleaners, disinfectants, laundry products
- **Paints and Solvents:** Latex and oil based paint, thinners, strippers, varnish, wood preservatives
- **Poisons:** Pesticides, herbicides, pool chemicals, rodent poison

While not all household hazardous materials fall into these four categories, most do.

Hazardous Product Labeling

Most hazardous products, including cleaning agents, detergents, polishes, stripping compounds, pesticides, and many others, are required by law to meet specific label requirements.

There are two specific sets of federal regulations for labeling hazardous products:

- Hazardous products, other than pesticides, which can be toxic, corrosive, irritant, flammable, or radioactive are regulated by the Federal Hazardous Substances Act (FHSA);
- Products containing pesticides which are toxic are regulated by the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA).

FHSA and FIFRA set the minimum standards for the information which labels must contain to comply with the law. Whether or not this information is found on the label depends upon the interest of the manufacturer in complying with the letter and spirit of the law.

Unfortunately for the consumer, labels serve more as a product advertisement than as a source of information for product safety. The brand name and effectiveness of the product are often the most visible words on the label. It is necessary to read the small print and all of the wording on the label to find the clues and information which can guide you in determining product safety.

Some labels do not even list ingredients of the product. For information on how to obtain this important consumer information, see the section on “How To Find Out What Is In These Products.”

How To Read A Pesticide Label

The labeling of pesticides is much more complicated than most other chemical products. This is necessary because many pesticides are more toxic than other chemicals found around the home. Warnings, use specifications, and directions must be much more complete and detailed.

You can tell the toxicity of a pesticide by looking at the signal word on the label. Pesticides are classified into **Toxicity Categories I-IV** (Category I is the most toxic, IV the least toxic). The signal words and the precautionary statements required on the label are different for each category.

The following Toxicity Rating Scale indicates the requirements for pesticide labels:

CATEGORY	If the label has this signal word		This is how toxic the product is	
	SIGNAL WORD REQUIRED ON LABEL		APPROX. AMOUNT NEEDED TO KILL AN AVERAGE PERSON	
I Highly toxic	DANGER POISON		A few drops to 1 teaspoon	
II Moderately toxic	WARNING		1 teaspoon to 1 ounce	
III Slightly toxic	CAUTION		Over 1 ounce	
IV Not toxic	not required			

PRECAUTIONARY STATEMENT BY TOXICITY

Oral Inhalation or dermal toxicity	Skin and eye local effects
I Fatal if swallowed (inhaled or absorbed through skin). Do not breathe vapor (dust or spray mist). Do not get in eyes, on skin or on clothing. (Front panel statement of treatment required.)	Corrosive, causes eye and skin damage (or skin irritation). Do not get in eyes, on skin or on clothing. Wear goggles or face shield and rubber gloves when handling. Harmful or fatal if swallowed. (Appropriate first aid statement required.)
II May be fatal if swallowed (inhaled or absorbed through the skin). Do not breathe vapors (dust or spray mist). Do not get in eyes, on skin or on clothing. (Appropriate first aid statement required.)	Causes eye (and skin) irritation. Do not get in eyes, on skin or on clothing. Harmful if swallowed. (Appropriate first aid statement required.)
III May be fatal if swallowed (inhaled or absorbed through the skin). Do not breathe vapors (dust or spray mist). Do not get in eyes, on skin or on clothing. (Appropriate first aid statement required.)	Avoid contact with skin, eyes or clothing. In case of contact, immediately flush eyes or skin with plenty of water. Get medical attention if irritation persists.
IV No precautionary statement required on container.	No precautionary statement required.

PESTICIDE LABEL EXAMPLE

1. **ZAPPO**

2. **Tranziapon Insect Spray**

3. Active Ingredients by wt.
Tranziapon*49%
Petroleum Derivative Solvent.....34%
Inert Ingredients..... 17%
3 Ditransudate of cismercapto pontificate

4. **Makes up to 24 gallons.** Diluted spray kills insects: Aphids, Red Spider Mites, Flies, Mealy-Bugs and Scales.

5. **Caution: Keep out of reach of children.**

6. Net contents 8 fl. oz. **Store in a cool, dry place, read entire label. Use in accordance with label cautions and directions. Keep in original container. Do not put concentrate or dilute into food or drink container.**
7. **Directions:** Spray thoroughly on infested plant parts. Repeat as necessary. **Household pests** (Roaches, Ants, Flies): 2 Tablespoons per gallon of water. Spray on area frequented by insects. Avoid contamination of food, dishes, utensils and water. Repeat as necessary. **Vegetables:** (Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Kale, Beans, Peas, Potatoes): 1 TBSP per gallon water. Do not apply to Broccoli and Peas within 3 days of harvest and to

Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Cauliflower or Kale within 7 days of harvest. Do not apply to Beans within 1 day of harvest. Use up to harvest on Potatoes.

8. Caution: Harmful if swallowed. Do not breathe vapor or spray mist. Avoid contact with skin; wash skin and hands thoroughly after using. Avoid contamination of food. Keep children and animals away from treated areas until the areas are dry. **If poison occurs, call a physician immediately.** Note to Physicians: Emergency Information – call (123)456-7890. **Atropine is antidotal. Do not use, pour, spill or store near heat or open flame.** Food utensils such as teaspoons or Tablespoons should not be used for food purposes after use with pesticide. Do not reuse container. Dispose of container when empty. This product will kill fish. Keep out of any body of water. Do not contaminate water by cleaning of equipment or disposal of wastes. Apply this product only as specified on this label. This product is highly toxic to bees. Protective information may be obtained from your Cooperative Agricultural Extension Service.

9. NOTICE: Buyer assumes all responsibility for safety and use not in accordance with directions.

10. Product 1223344 EPA Reg. No. 0000 EPA Est 111-22-3

11. Chemico Chemical Company, 100 Main Street, Beaverton, MD 54321

WHAT EACH LABEL ITEM MEANS

1. Brand Name. The name, brand, or trademark is plainly displayed on the front panel of the product label. The brand name is the name used in ads by the company that makes the product and is the most identifiable name for the product.

2. Common Name. All chemicals have a scientific name. Many times chemicals with a complex scientific name are also given a simpler common name. Both the scientific name and the common name of the chemical will be the same for every company. The brand name will differ depending on which company made the chemical.

3. Ingredients Statement. Every pesticide label must list what is in the product. It must show the percent that is the active ingredient and the percent that is inert ingredient. The names of the active ingredients must be shown either by chemical name or common and chemical name. Presently the inert ingredients do not need to be listed. New labeling regulations will require toxic inert ingredients to be listed.

4. Type of Formulation. A pesticide may be available in more than one type of formulation – liquids, wettable powders, emulsifiable concentrations, dusts, and others. Different types of

formulations require different methods of handling. The label will say what type of formulation the package contains and how to use it properly.

5. Child Hazard Warning. Every pesticide container must bear the statement “KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN” on the front label.

6. Net Contents. The label must show how much product is in the container. This can be expressed in ounces, liters, pounds or other units.

7. Directions for Use. The instructions on the label must tell you how to use the product properly within its legal requirements for the best results. The directions will tell you:

- The pests the product is registered to control.
- The crops, animals or other items the products can be used on.
- In what form the product should be applied.
- How to apply the product.
- How much to use.
- Where it should be applied.
- When it should be applied.
- How frequently it should be applied.
- How soon the crop may be used or eaten after the product is applied.

8. Warning or Caution Statements. The label must tell you the type of hazard the product poses (corrosive, flammable, toxic, etc.) and how to avoid the hazard. If the pesticide is highly toxic, this section must inform physicians of the proper treatment for poisoning. Whether or not the product is highly toxic, the label should also state what types of exposure require medical attention. If a poisoning occurs, call your local emergency number or contact the Regional Poison Center for advice. Be sure to provide label information to the treating medical personnel. Emergency first aid measures must be stated on the label, however, antidotes are not always in keeping with current medical recommendations.

Warning and Caution statements will also tell you in what ways the product may be poisonous to humans and domestic animals. It will make recommendations on how to avoid poisoning such as protective clothing or ventilation requirements. However, more information in this area than is legally required is needed on the labels of pesticides. Types of safety equipment are not always clearly defined, and it is not specified how much ventilation is adequate (an open window, exhaust fan, or use outdoors).

Pesticides or pesticide residues may contaminate water supplies, accumulate to dangerous levels in the environment, or may harm birds, fish or wildlife. To address these problems, the label may contain environmental precautions applying to air, water or wildlife.

9. Misuse Statement. To use a pesticide product in any manner inconsistent with its labeling is a violation of federal law. You are reminded of this in the misuse statement.

10. Registration and Establishment Numbers. Every pesticide on the market must be registered with the Environmental Protection Agency of the federal government. The registration number must be on the front panel of the label and is written as "EPA Registration No. XXX." The establishment number, which is a code for which factory makes the chemical, must also be on every pesticide container. It usually appears under the registration number.

11. Name and Address of Manufacturer. The name and address of the company that made or distributed the product must be on the label. This way the purchaser of the product knows who made or sold the product and can contact them if necessary. Companies will also provide you with a materials safety data sheet upon request.

How To Read A Product Label (non-pesticide)

PRODUCT LABEL EXAMPLE

1. BRITE BLEACH Contains No Phosphates

2. Active Ingredient: Sodium Hypochloride 5%

3. 64 fl. oz (2 Quart)

4. Caution: Keep Out Of Reach Of Children

BRITE: Household Uses

5. Use BRITE to clean your bathroom and kitchen. BRITE is an excellent disinfectant and deodorizer. BRITE cleans by removing stubborn stains and eliminating odor-causing germs from surfaces all around the house.

- Toilet Bowls – Pour in 1/2 cup of BRITE. Brush entire bowl. Let stand 10 minutes. Do not use with toilet bowl cleaners. See caution statement.
- Kitchen Sinks – Cover stains with water. Pour 1/2 cup of BRITE directly into standing water.
- Floor – Clean with a solution of 1 cup of BRITE per gallon of sudsy water. Do not use on cork.
- Bathtubs and Showers – Clean with a solution of 1 cup of BRITE per gallon warm water.

BRITE: Laundry Use

Directions for Use: For best results, use the proper amount of BRITE in your wash water.

- Large top-loading automatic: 1-1/2 cups
- Regular top-loading automatic: 1 cup
- Front-loading automatic: 1/2 cup
- Heavy-soiled laundry: increase 1/2 cup
- Hand laundry: 2 gallons of sudsy water, 1/4 cup BRITE

6. WRITE for a free BRITE "Guide to Cleaner Laundry" booklet or other information on laundry and house cleaning to the BRITE Co., P.O. Box 12345, Braselton, WA 44150.

7. For Use On The Following Fabrics: Cotton, linen, synthetics, permanent press and all color-fast fabrics.

Do not use BRITE on silk, wool, mohair, leather, spandex or non-color fast fabrics.

8. Caution: BRITE may be harmful if swallowed or may cause severe eye irritation if splashed in eyes. If swallowed, feed milk. If splashed in eyes, flood with water. Call Physician. **Skin irritant:** If contact with skin, wash off with water. Do not use BRITE with ammonia or products containing acids such as **toilet bowl cleaners, rust removers, or vinegar**; to do so will release **hazardous gases**. Prolonged contact with metal may cause pitting or discoloration. **Do not use this bottle for storage of any other liquid but BRITE.**

WHAT EACH LABEL ITEM MEANS

The labels of household products containing hazardous substances must include at least the following information:

1. Brand Name.

2. Common and/or Chemical Name. A list of the common names of the hazardous ingredients; if a hazardous substance has no common name, the chemical name will be listed. Both names may appear on the label, as in this case. "Sodium Hypochloride" is the chemical name. "Bleach" is the common name.

3. Amount of Contents.

4. Signal Word. The signal word "Danger" on substances which are extremely flammable, corrosive, or highly toxic.

The signal words "Warning" or "Caution" on all other hazardous substances. This word is usually followed by "Keep out of reach of children."

The word "non-toxic" is an advertising word and lacks a Federal Regulatory definition.

5. Instructions for Safe Handling and Use. Warnings about what not to mix the product with or where to avoid use of the product. The quantities for proper use of the product are listed here. (Always use the recommended amount. Using more of a product does not mean a better job will result!)

6. Name and Address of Manufacturer, Distributor, Packer or Seller. (Contact the manufacturer about any questions concerning the product.)

7. Description of Hazard and Precautions. A description of the principal hazard involved in using the product. In this case, the product is an "irritant" to the skin and eyes, and to the gastrointestinal system if swallowed. Other words that may be used to describe the principal hazard in using products may include "Vapor Harmful," "Flammable," "Corrosive," "Absorbed Through the Skin" and such.

A statement of what to do to avoid the hazard such as precautions to wear gloves or eye protection, or to provide

adequate ventilation. A shortcoming of labels is that they do not specify how much ventilation is adequate, or (in many cases) what safety equipment should be used with the product.

8. First Aid Instructions, When Necessary Or Appropriate. On some hazardous products, antidotes are provided in case of accidental poisoning. However, especially with older products, many of the antidotes are not in keeping with current medical recommendations. In the event of a poison emergency, always call for emergency services or the **Regional Poison Center (1-800-542-6319)**.

How To Find Out What Is In These Products

It is very important to know what ingredients are contained in a product so that you can adequately protect yourself from the dangers of working with that product. If a product label does not provide ingredients or adequate instructions on how to safely use the product, consider buying a product that does list this basic information.

One way to find out what is in a product that does not list ingredients is to contact the manufacturer, distributor, or retailer and request a copy of the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for that product. An MSDS lists the ingredients in a hazardous product, its manufacturer, its hazards to safety and health, and precautions to follow when using it.

While manufacturers do not have to provide consumers with an MSDS, reputable manufacturers should. Response is often slow, so don't be surprised if it takes 4-6 weeks. Keep copies of the letters you send asking for Material Safety Data Sheets. For assistance in understanding the terminology of an MSDS, contact the Clark County Department of Public Works for an "MSDS Fact Sheet."

If you need answers about what a product contains in a relatively short time, you can call the **Regional Poison Center (1-800-542-6319)** and request information on products and the potential health effects of their ingredients

For More Information Call:

- **1-360-397-6118 ext. 4016** *Clark County Solid Waste* provides information about household and business hazardous waste, waste reduction, recycling, composting and other solid waste issues.
- **1-360-696-8186** *Vancouver Solid Waste* provides information about waste reduction, recycling, composting and other solid waste issues.
- **Department of Ecology: 1-360-690-7171** *Vancouver Field Office* provides information on business generated waste and water quality issues.
- **1-360-407-6300** *24 Hour Emergency Spill Response* provides for the cleanup of chemical and hazardous waste spills and leaks.
- **1-800-633-7585** *Hazardous Substance Information Office* provides information about the proper disposal of business generated hazardous products/waste.
- **1-800-RECYCLE** *Recycle Hotline* provides information about recycling non-toxic products and the disposal of household hazardous waste products.

Additional Hazardous Material/Waste brochures are available from Clark County Department of Public Works. To obtain a copy of the following brochures call 397-6118 ext. 4352.

- *Household Hazardous Material – Product Labeling*
- *Household Hazardous Material – Purchasing, Storing and Disposing*
- *Household Hazardous Material – Household Safety: Preventive Measures and Protective Equipment*
- *Safer Alternatives: Reducing The Risk In The Garage*
- *Safer Alternatives: Reducing The Risk In The Home*
- *Safer Alternatives: Reducing The Risk In The Yard And Garden*
- *Household Hazardous Waste Disposal Program*
- *Get The Point: Be Safe With Your Used Syringes*
- *Clark County Recycling Directory*

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Although attempts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this booklet, Clark County Department of Public Works assumes no responsibility or liability for the effectiveness or results of procedures described in this publication and disclaims any injury or damage resulting from the use or effect of any product or information specified in this publication.



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